

Gil Bligh, Director of Water Services City of New Britain
**Testimony: Re: Senate Bill No. 300: An Acting Concerning New
Britain Water Company Land**
Public Health Committee Public Hearing
March 7, 2016

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana and other members of the Public Health Committee.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of **Senate Bill 300**—a bill that could change the amount of fresh drinking water available in Central Connecticut for generations to come.

Some will tell you this bill revives an old argument that allowing the city to lease its land to Tilcon will somehow threaten the state's high-level protection of lands around drinking water reservoirs.

I am here today to tell you the only threat existing - is if we do NOTHING. What if communities need more water, how do they get it?

The way the law is written any change of use to the land around drinking water reservoirs requires approval by the Department of Public Health (DPH). Such approval traditionally is only granted to small activities related to good management of the (public's) water. This however, was not the case in New Britain when the new filtration plant was constructed in 2000 to 2004.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health issued water company land permits for both the construction of the new filtration plant and for the demolition of the old filtration plant.

Both permits were for change of use in Class 1 and 2 Water Company lands. The activities included not only the blasting and removal of ledge on Class 1 watershed, but also the crushing on site of the blasted trap rock and the use of that crushed stone under the foundation of the new filtration plant. So there is precedent for allowing this type of change.

That project also involved the relocation of a Class 1 water course that emptied directly into Shuttle Meadow Reservoir and when it was time for demolition on Class 1 and 2 watershed all precautions were taken. The project was reviewed and site audited by officials from the EPA, the CTDEP and the CTDPH.

Some may also argue rock mining ruins the natural landscape and natural vegetation and should not be approved in these special areas. Well, New Britain's Wasel Reservoir was made in the 1960's by blasting trap rock in what would now be Class 1 land and using the blasted ledge to build the dam on that same Class 1 land. The removal of ledge is a necessary function in construction.

Are earth materials valuable? Sure. But a clean fresh water drinking supply is priceless.

Some may say there is no urgency for this new reservoir. But good water supply engineering and planning requires this type of 40 year planning. The placement of a 4.7 Billion gallon reservoir adjacent to New Britain, Plainville, Berlin, Southington and Bristol is needed to secure the availability and reliability of Class A drinking water for this region.

If you allow this legislation to move forward - there will be 240 acres of beautiful water and open space. There will be no roads, or road salt to worry about, no industrial, commercial or residential activities will be in the watershed.

The new reservoir would fill by both naturally occurring rainfall and through existing upland supplies that are State approved drinking water sources. And when there is a need to fill draught stricken brooks and rivers the water from the reservoir can be shared to fill them.

Think of ALL the benefit to the region and to the state for generations to come.

I thank you for your time and your consideration.